

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for limiting the delivery of content in a communications network environment comprising:
 - establishing the assumed frequencies with which subsets of a set of content elements have been viewed by individual users of the communications network environment;
 - evaluating the assumed frequencies with regard to predetermined frequency targets;
 - determining whether or not the evaluation of the assumed frequencies warrants the delivery of alternate content;
 - providing a mechanism for the delivery of the alternate content;
 - updating data stored in a communications network storage device to aid in determinations of whether the alternate content should be shown.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the mechanism for the delivery of the alternate content enables publishers in the communications network environment to provide the alternate content.
3. The method of claim 2, wherein any given publisher within the communications network environment is provided with a mechanism to provide the alternate content that is independent of other publishers within the communications network environment.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the data used in determining whether or not the frequency evaluation of the assumed frequencies with regard to predetermined frequency targets warrants the delivery of alternate content is stored in the content viewers web browser.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein the data used in determining whether or not the frequency evaluation of the assumed frequencies with regard to predetermined frequency targets warrants the delivery of alternate content is stored on a communications network storage device other than the content viewers web browser.
6. The method of claim 1, where an absence of available data for determining whether or not the frequency evaluation of the assumed frequencies with regard to predetermined frequency targets warrants the delivery of alternate content is interpreted in determining whether or not the delivery of alternate content is warranted.
7. The method of claim 2, wherein the alternate content is provided by a mechanism in the group consisting of:
 - a. Defining a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) pointing to the location where the alternate content is intended to be retrieved from,
 - b. Defining a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) pointing to programming code that is intended to be retrieved and executed with the purpose of causing the display of the alternate content,
 - c. Defining the alternate content within the content container, such as a web page,

- d. Defining programming code within the content container, such as a web page, that will cause the display of the alternate content,
- e. Redirecting the browser to a location within the publisher's authority, which enables the publisher to return the alternate content in response.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the delivery of the alternate content can be aborted and the original content can instead be delivered.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the mechanism to abort the delivery of the alternate content is triggered from an event in the group consisting of:

- a. a time delay in the process of determining whether or not the frequency evaluation of the assumed frequencies with regard to predetermined frequency targets warrants the delivery of the alternate content,
- b. a time delay in the delivery of the alternate content,
- c. an error in the process of determining whether or not the frequency evaluation of the assumed frequencies with regard to predetermined frequency targets warrants the delivery of the alternate content,
- d. an error in the delivery of the alternate content.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein the alternate content is null content.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein the content is an advertisement.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein the subset of the set of content elements is a proper subset of the set of content elements.

13. A method for limiting the delivery of content in a communications network environment comprising:

establishing the assumed frequencies with which subsets of a set of content elements have been viewed by individual users of the communications network environment for subsets of a set of publishers;

evaluating the assumed frequencies with regard to predetermined frequency targets;

determining whether or not the evaluation of the assumed frequencies warrants the delivery of alternate content;

providing a mechanism for the delivery of the alternate content;

updating data stored in a communications network storage device to aid in determinations of whether the alternate content should be shown.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the determination of whether the delivery of the alternate content is warranted for a particular user is based on the evaluation of the assumed frequencies with which particular subsets of a set of content elements have been viewed by the particular user within a particular subset of the set of publishers.

15. The method of claim 13, wherein the mechanism for the delivery of the alternate content enables publishers in the communications network environment to provide the alternate content.
16. The method of claim 15, wherein any given publisher within the communications network environment is provided with a mechanism to provide the alternate content that is independent of other publishers within the communications network environment.
17. The method of claim 13, wherein the data used in determining whether or not the frequency evaluation of the assumed frequencies with regard to predetermined frequency targets warrants the delivery of alternate content is stored in the content viewers web browser.
18. The method of claim 13, wherein the data used in determining whether or not the frequency evaluation of the assumed frequencies with regard to predetermined frequency targets warrants the delivery of alternate content is stored on a communications network storage device other than the content viewers web browser.
19. The method of claim 13, where an absence of available data for determining whether or not the frequency evaluation of the assumed frequencies with regard to predetermined frequency targets warrants the delivery of alternate content is interpreted in determining whether or not the delivery of alternate content is warranted.
20. The method of claim 15, wherein the alternate content is provided by a mechanism in the group consisting of:

- a. Defining a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) pointing to the location where the alternate content is intended to be retrieved from,
- b. Defining a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) pointing to programming code that is intended to be retrieved and executed with the purpose of causing the display of the alternate content,
- c. Defining the alternate content within the content container, such as a web page,
- d. Defining programming code within the content container, such as a web page, that will cause the display of the alternate content,
- e. Redirecting the browser to a location within the publisher's authority, which enables the publisher to return the alternate content in response.

21. The method of claim 13, wherein the delivery of the alternate content can be aborted and the original content can instead be delivered.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein the mechanism to abort the delivery of the alternate content is triggered from an event in the group consisting of:

- a. a time delay in the process of determining whether or not the frequency evaluation of the assumed frequencies with regard to predetermined frequency targets warrants the delivery of the alternate content,
- b. a time delay in the delivery of the alternate content,

- c. an error in the process of determining whether or not the frequency evaluation of the assumed frequencies with regard to predetermined frequency targets warrants the delivery of the alternate content,
- d. an error in the delivery of the alternate content.

23. The method of claim 13, wherein the alternate content is null content.

24. The method of claim 13, wherein the content is an advertisement.

25. The method of claim 13, wherein the subset of the set of content elements is a proper subset of the set of content elements

26. The method of claim 13, wherein the subset of a set of publishers is a proper subset of the set of publishers.